

THE RING,

OR

The Merry Wives of Madrid :

TRANSLATED BY

BENJAMIN THOMPSON,

TRANSLATOR OF THE STRANGER,

As performed at the Theatre Royal Drury-Lane.

“ We'll leave a proof by that which we will do,
“ Wives may be merry, and yet honest too.”

SHAKESPEARE.

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1862, Feb. 17.
Gift of
Henry G. Denny, Esq.
of Boston
(Class of 1852)

TO
JOSEPH BILBIE ESQ.

*TO you, as a student of the new
profession called hoaxing, I address
this trifle, with the assurance that I
am not hoaxing, when I subscribe
myself*

Your very sincere friend,

Benjamin Thompson.

NOTTINGHAM, }
1st July, 1799. }

To you, as a friend of the man
I have been thinking of, I address
a few words of encouragement. I
trust you will find the assurance that I
am not hesitating when I subscribe

Yours truly,
Frederick Douglass
Thompson

THE RING,

&c.

IN the capital of Spain lived three young, handsome, virtuous, and sensible women, about whom, when the priest pronounced the nuptial benediction, no saint seems to have troubled himself.

The first was married to a man, who held the offices of principal book-keeper and cashier in the counting-house of a rich merchant. By his extensive knowledge in every branch of trade; his experience, his unremitted diligence, and the success, which always attended his speculations, he had gained the unbounded confidence of his employer, who relied on him as an oracle, and entrusted to him the entire management of his affairs.

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These

These affairs of his master (We beg that this point may not be overlooked) so entirely occupied the head and heart of our good book-keeper, that to the great mortification of his young wife, he quite forgot his own. For, although he had amassed a considerable fortune, on which he might have lived comfortably and without any assistance from business, yet were the advantages derived from his situation so pleasant and tempting, that day and night he thought of nothing but his master's affairs. At day-break, he went to the counting-house—dined there—and never returned home but to sup, and that too, in general, at a very late hour. On Sundays and holy-days, (which every good Christian employs in devotion and recreation) he examined accounts, collected bad debts, &c. but on little accounts, which an honest wife likes best to settle with her husband, he scarcely bestowed consideration once in a quarter of a year. Poor Leonora was therefore married almost but by name.

Fate

Fate had united the second lady to a painter, and fate could not have disposed of her in a worse way. This painter was very eminent in his art. His works seemed to live and breathe, and he made a conscientious rule (in our opinion very much to his honour) of remaining faithful to nature. When he for instance delineated a Francis, a Bernhard, or any other saint, you might take your oath, as solemnly as if you had seen the picture, that he had not bedaubed the canvass with a lean broom-staff, folded within the venerable mantle of the order. No. He was firmly of opinion that saints should be drawn with a good round share of flesh upon them—a sort of commodious *En-bon-point*: Nor was he in want of forcible argument in support of this opinion, for he would often say that we attacked the honour of a saint, and deviated from nature, when we took it into our heads to depict him as starved as old time, as thin as a grey-hound, with fallen cheeks, and lips scarcely capable of covering his teeth. After having

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said

said thus much with that triumph in his look and tone, which never appears but from the consciousness of incontrovertible certainty, he was wont with a gentle smile to lay his hand upon the shoulder of his auditor, or confidentially to pull at one of his buttons,—then, as if he were about to divulge the deepest arcana of his art, and deposit them in the most secret archives of the other's soul, he would thus proceed.

“For, if you will please, Signor, to notice any of the holy cloisters, you will find that in spite of all their rigid laws, fasts, abstinences, penances, and masses, in spite of the renunciation of worldly wishes and the vow of chastity, the good monks are as fat as bacon, and boast a periphery, not often to be seen among laymen. There may, to be sure, be something miraculous in this, but what is that to us? If it be a fact, we have no right to crack our brains in endeavouring to discover whether it be produced by any supernatural

supernatural assistance. It is so—and there let it rest. Now, Signor, I deduce this inference. If, notwithstanding the circumstances which I have mentioned, Heaven, in its bounty, has ordained that the sons shall be round and fat, by what right can we deny their fathers the privilege of a double-chin?”

Our painter spoke like an adept, and his works justified the great celebrity which he had acquired. He principally excelled in the representation of sacred and scriptural history; for which reason he was employed by all the cloisters and churches in and round Madrid. As he was very diligent, and extremely devoted to his profession, he, like the book-keeper, was from home throughout the day. To this was we must add, that, though a good painter, he was a bad husband, for, so fond was he of wine and other deviations from propriety, that he spent the holy days and all the time not occupied by his art, in taverns, &c. where the large sums, which

he earned, were squandered without reflection. Poor Theresa, therefore, with such a husband was still more to be pitied than Leonora, the wife of the cashier.

It is, doubtless, a very mournful situation for a young and virtuous wife to be neglected by her husband, and made subservient to the revels of a tavern, or of a still worse place. We must, nevertheless, allow that the consequent solitude by day, and uninterrupted peace by night, were real happiness, when compared to the unfortunate situation, in which Francisca, the youngest and most beautiful of our three heroines, was placed. Heaven in its wrath had doomed her to be the warming-pan of an old gouty fellow, who was already on the wrong side of sixty. So great was this man's jealousy, that he made it his only business by day and night to guard the best and most amiable of wives, and by his unwarrantable suspicions to inflict on her as severe torments, as he experienced from the gout. For
this

this his favourite pursuit he had the more leisure, as he lived without any business or profession on a very considerable income.

Leonora, Theresa, and Francisca had been play-fellows, and confidential friends from their earliest years. They had even found means to extend their intimacy to their husbands. Luckily, too, they were near neighbours, and could the more easily meet each other, especially the wives of the painter and book-keeper, for as to Francisca, she dared not, unless permitted by her husband, look through the window, still less durst she attempt to step over the threshold. Hence, she was unable to return the visits of her friends so often as she wished.

Before we proceed in our narrative, the commencement of which has, perhaps, been in many places dry enough, we feel ourselves compelled, for the sake of better understanding, to make a digression,

gression, which in dryness will not at all yield to our commencement. But we pledge our words to the reader, that this digression shall be the only one in the whole work,—at least the only one of any consequence. We promise too, in the sequel to recompence all those who may have been displeased at the poverty, which our story has hitherto exhibited. But if (which Heaven forefend!) there be any one, who has liked our aforementioned dulness, we humbly request that he will, without ceremony, leave the following pages (our present digression excepted) unread; for be it hereby known unto all whom it may concern, that we will have nothing to do with grave people, and that all may be certain what kind of goods are to be found in our warehouse, we hang this notice on our sign:

“The present book is written for those only, whose risibility can be excited.”

But to the digression itself—for this
was

was only the preface or passport to the digression.

Learn then, good friend, who perhaps hast expended a few rials on this book in hopes of laughing away an idle quarter of an hour—learn what thou probably art ignorant of, unless thou hast been at Madrid, that beside St. Anne's day there are four others, which are at that place celebrated with still greater solemnity and festivity than Easter. These are, Saint Blasius's day, Saint Jacob the Green's day, Saint John's Eve, and *Nuestro Sennora de los Angeles'* day. Of these four festivals, which no one will learn from any almanack, St. Blasius's next to St. John's is the most splendid. It is on the third of February, and therefore just at that season of the year, when in our warmer climates the sun begins to let us feel his influence. On this occasion the ladies for the first time walk abroad. They assemble on a plain near the Prado to *tomar sol*, that is, to enjoy the sunshine. The plain is at
that

that time filled with an innumerable concourse of people of all descriptions, who there celebrate St. Blasius's day, by various kinds of amusement.

After this necessary digression, we resume the thread of our story, as follows.

Some days previous to this festival, the three friends met at the house of the old jealous wretch, whose wife described to the others her disagreeable situation. She related the innumerable persecutions, which she was obliged to endure from her husband, and could not find words to express his ceaseless jealousy and absurd whims: Not a fly, she assured them, could settle on her nose, without incurring his suspicion—nay he disliked the edge of her head-dress, because it touched her face. If she wished to attend mass, he always accompanied her (as indeed he did on every occasion) and never allowed her to go but at day-break, because the churches were then least frequented. If,
at

at this time even a boy or an old man cast but a transient glance towards her, it was a sufficient excuse for inflicting upon her unremitted torment for many days. Nay, even—here the tears trickled down her lovely cheeks—even at night, though in a room doubly locked and bolted, in bed, and in his arms, he would not trust her, but—here her tears increased——“ Oh Theresa! Oh Leonora! It will choke me. I am so much ashamed that I cannot describe it.—Only think—every night I am obliged to creep into a sort of wide sack, which reaches from my feet to my chin. This he himself binds round my neck with a silver chain, fastened by a padlock, the key of which he always keeps in one of the pockets of his drawers. In this shameful situation I am obliged to pass the night, and am never released 'till he has risen, and is entirely dressed.”

Leonora and Theresa heard the complaint of the unfortunate Francisca with sincere

sincere compassion, and exhorted her to be patient.

During this conversation their husbands arrived, and it was now high time to change the subject. They took a little refreshment, and agreed to celebrate St. Blasius's day together at the place already mentioned, in order to see his Majesty pass, who intended to visit our Lady of Atocha. It was resolved that they should have a little entertainment in a garden near the plain, and pass the rest of the day there. It follows, of course, that many intercessions were used, before leave was obtained from her jealous husband that Francisca might accompany her friends.

The anxiously expected day arrived, and our party betook themselves to the appointed garden, where they had ordered refreshments. The ladies, having partaken of the collation, retired.* The men then

* In Spain, the ladies on such occasions are waited upon by the men, who do not take seats at table 'till the former have finished, and retired.

then took their seats, and afterwards amused themselves in the garden, while their wives had thrown themselves upon the ground in the pleasantest part of the meadow to *tomar sol*. While they were lying here, and, like the innumerable crowd assembled round them, were rejoicing at the return of spring, Francisca espied something uncommonly brilliant in a heap of dirt. She pointed it out to her friends, and scarcely had they fixed their eyes upon it, when Leonora said that it might perhaps be a diamond, lost by some lady, who was walking in the meadows. "It certainly is a precious stone," continued she, "or I am very much mistaken. Did you ever see any thing sparkle like it?"

No sooner did Theresa hear this than she arose, and, unrestrained by female nicety, took it out of the dirt. It was a diamond-ring, of which the stone was so transcendantly brilliant that it rivalled the beams of the sun, and made all our

C

three

three friends feel an evident desire to be its possessor. This, of course, gave rise to a little contention. Each endeavoured to advance reasons by which she had a right to claim it as her property. Francisca asserted that the jewel belonged to her, because she first discovered it. Leonora grounded her claim on having first declared its value. Theresa, however, maintained she had the greatest right to it, because she had scratched it out of the mire, and thereby convinced the others that it was a diamond, whereas they could not before be certain whether it was any thing more than a piece of glass.

We hope, however, that we deserve some thanks, and that we shall be an excellent example to future writers, if we omit the principal part of this dialogue. We, therefore, shall only state, that it became so warm on all sides as to endanger the mutual friendship so long maintained, when the painter's wife, (who perhaps in sound sense exceeded the other two) collected

lected her faculties, and made this proposition to her friends.

"Ladies," said she, "the stone, about which we are at variance, is of no value unless whole. It is, therefore, impossible to divide it, were I even to allow that your pretensions to it are as just as mine. My advice is that we sell the ring, and divide the money. It is necessary, however, that we adopt some plan, before we are interrupted by our husbands. Do you agree to my proposal?" "We do!" cried Francisca and Leonora.

"Enough!" said Theresa, "But now, another question arises. Who shall, in the mean time, have the honour of keeping the ring in possession?" This question caused a further discussion, which was again ended by a proposition from the painter's wife.

"I see yonder," said she, "the Marquis de Castromonte. How, if we were

to refer the matter to him? He is our neighbour, and his integrity well known to us."

"With all my heart," answered both.

A report now suddenly spread on every side that the King was coming. All hastened to see him pass, and our jealous husband, (whose eye had been fixed on his wife from the garden, though at too great a distance to hear what was the nature of her conversation with her friends) was dragged away by his two companions in the crowd. The three disputants instantly seized the lucky opportunity of calling to the Marquis. They made a brief relation of the circumstances, and besought him to give a speedy decision, that Francisca's husband might not, by discovering him in conversation with her, be furnished with an excuse for inflicting additional torment. At the same time they delivered to him the diamond.

Don Ferdinand Manrique, Marquis de
Castramonte,

Castramonte, a grandee of the first class, was a very upright man. He possessed a penetrating understanding, and was proverbially polite towards the fair sex. He listened with attention to the claims advanced by each, and then spoke as follows:

“ I must confess, ladies, you have each so much in your favour, that far greater penetration than mine is necessary to make a decision on your rights. Your claims to the diamond are as equal as your beauty and accomplishments, and I find it impossible to be just to one angel unless by being unjust to two. The intention of dividing the value of the ring does not suit my ideas, and yet were I to attempt to decide the dispute by lots, should I not depreciate the merits of all three, by suffering chance to decide in favour of one? Allow me then, ladies, to found this decision on your own understandings, in every respect far above my own. I know your fate. I know that

you all, though in different ways, are victims to the strange dispositions of your husbands. Enough, then! As you have thought proper to elect me your judge, my sentence is that this ring be the property of her, who shall execute the greatest imposition on her husband, tending to his own reformation. I have too great a reliance on your honour to suppose that the honour of your husbands can be at all endangered by my proposal. The ring I will, with your permission, keep in my hands till the event shall decide to whom it belongs."

The Marquis de Castramonte could not easily have made a proposition more agreeable to the three friends; for each so firmly relied on her subtlety that she already fancied herself the owner of the diamond. They cheerfully consented to the proposal, and left the ring in the Marquis's hands. Don Manrique then took his leave, and continued his walk. The three husbands soon after returned, and the day was

was concluded on the part of the females by *tomar sol*, and of the men, by play.

The book-keeper's wife was somewhat covetous. The hope of gaining so valuable a jewel increased her avarice, to which may be added the reputation, which she expected from the conquest, and the idea that her rivals would be galled at being excelled. All this worked so strongly on her mind, that she summoned the whole force of her female cunning, and projected the trick, which we will now impart to our readers.

But a few houses from her's lived a surgeon, whose greatest pleasure consisted in the study of astrology. He had formerly been an admirer of the fair Leonora, and in his heart was so still, but perceiving that he sighed in vain, and that his Latin was thrown away upon her, he had renounced all hopes. Leonora was far too quick-sighted to be deceived by her swain's affected indifference, and though
nothing

nothing could induce her to trespass in the least on the bounds of nuptial fidelity, yet she determined to avail herself of this man's assistance in forwarding her project. To this end she treated him with greater kindness, and assumed towards him by degrees a conduct so obliging and insinuating, that he began to flatter himself with the sweet idea of having at length made some impression on her heart. As soon as Leonora perceived that his hopes were re-kindled, she asked him if she might rely on his assistance in a little carnival frolic. Our astrologer was transported in having such an opportunity of shewing his ardour in her service, and promised to do every thing, which she might require.

“I wish you, then,” said Leonora, “to inform my husband very solemnly that you have searched into his nativity, and by virtue of your art have discovered that he must infallibly die within four and twenty hours. Use all your eloquence and every endeavour to convince him.

The

The more firmly you impose upon him, the more shall I consider myself obliged to you."

The planet-reader was heartily pleased that his Goddeſs would conſider ſuch a trifle as a favour, and promiſed to commence his attack that very evening. He then took the liberty of expreſſing ſome curioſity as to her intentions, and ſhe promiſed, if he ſucceeded in his firſt endeavours, to acquaint him with the whole ſcheme on the ſucceeding day, when ſhe perhaps might want his aſſiſtance in another trifle. The ſurgeon repeated his aſſurances that nothing would give him greater pleaſure than to obey her commands, and went to his poſt, as the time approached, when the book-keeper uſually came from the counting-houſe.

No ſooner did he eſpy his man at a diſtance, than he went towards him, as if he met him quite by accident. They greeted each other, when our aſtrologer began

began the farce by saying: "Are you not well, neighbour? Methinks you look most miserably."

"I am very well, I thank you; except that my head is rather confused by some intricate accounts, which I have been this afternoon examining. In other respects, I never was better."

"Your colour, my dear Guzman" (which was the book-keeper's name) "tells me just the reverse. Believe me, death is often very near us, when we fancy that we feel well.—Let me feel your pulse, friend."

Guzman presented his hand in evident uneasiness. The surgeon carefully examined his pulse, stared directly in his face, and then stood for a minute or two in deep meditation, and with a countenance, expressive of increasing anxiety and friendly sorrow. At length he thus broke the solemn silence.

“ I assure you, dear neighbour, that I should not repent all the time, pains, and expense, which I have bestowed upon my two favourite studies astrology and medicine, if they were even of no further advantage to me than in enabling me to warn you of a rapidly approaching danger. I should not be your friend, if I concealed from you what most nearly concerns you, and what you doubtless little suspect. My dear friend, arrange all your spiritual and worldly affairs without delay, for I solemnly assure you that you have not four and twenty hours to live. It grieves me to the soul that I am doomed to be the harbinger of such mournful tidings—but alas, it is certain. To-morrow, at this time, you will have been long convinced that this afternoon would have been much better employed in adjusting the affairs of your conscience, than in settling the confused accounts of your principal.”

This address, delivered with the greatest solemnity,

solemnity, and with every appearance of sincerity, had certainly some effect upon the spirits of our book-keeper. Yet he replied with a smile: "All I can say, neighbour, is that I feel, in my own opinion, very well, and place as much reliance on your prophecy as the circumstances relative to Alonzo Sanchez's wife justify me in doing. You, no doubt, remember, that you foretold she would bring male-twins into the world, and die in child-bed, whereas she was delivered of a dead daughter, and is now alive."

The surgeon surveyed him with eyes full of compassion, and said in the tone of a man, who is certain of his fact: "Well, my dear Guzman, scoff as you please. I have done my duty as a Christian, and" added he in a warning voice, "you will at least have no cause to complain in another world, that I neglected to apprise you of your fate."

With these words he embraced him,
and

and exhibited all the heartfelt sorrow of a man, who is taking an eternal leave of an intimate friend. He then walked a few steps—turned suddenly round, as if overpowered by an inward impulse—silently clasped him once more in his arms—pressed his hand—and went.

The book-keeper was in reality startled by the unexpected intelligence, and the last address, the mien and decisive tone of his friend completed his alarm. He pursued his way towards home, buried in thought, and although he placed little reliance on his neighbour's prophecies, yet could he not forbear to feel his pulse at intervals, and once or twice to lay his hand upon his heart. Although every thing there seemed in perfect order, and he had long been accustomed to ridicule his friend's skill in astrology, yet he had, nevertheless, a high respect for him as a medical man, having often experienced the good effects of his advice and assistance in the family. Thus did his doubtful and

D

uneasy

uneasy mind poise between one side and the other, but anxiety at last held the sway.

In this disposition he entered his house, resolved not to mention to his wife what had passed, but unable to conceal his uneasiness, which appeared in every look and action. Leonora, who observed him attentively, soon discovered how well her ambassador had played his part, and inwardly enjoyed poor Guzman's disastrous appearance. He ordered supper to be brought, eat very little, shewed signs of great disorder, rose from table in deep meditation, and said he would go to bed. His wife enquired very affectionately if he was not well, to which he replied that he was perfectly so. She then asked if any thing disagreeable had happened to him, for she never before saw him look so oddly. Here a tear or two (which women, as one has heard, always have at command) stole down her cheeks. He, however, maintained that nothing had occurred

curred to make him uneasy and they went to bed. Guzman slept as little as he had eat, and if his eyes chanced to close, he saw nothing but graves and funeral-processions. His wife suffered him to toss from side to side, and affected to be asleep, while she was, in reality, enjoying the success of her deception.

Guzman rose earlier than usual, and went to the counting-house. His delight at having again beheld day-light made him hope that he might survive the evening, and he began to treat the surgeon's prophecy with contempt. Nay more, he enjoyed the idea of deriding his neighbour's boasted skill in astrology. Let us leave him to this enjoyment, and while he is occupied with drafts, invoices, ballances and accounts of sales, we will take a survey of his frolicsome wife's proceedings.

As soon as Guzman had left the house, she summoned her privy council, which consisted of the astrologer, the jealous

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Antonio,

Antonio, Gonfalso the painter, and Zambulo the vicar, a merry wag, who liked better to look at the eyes of a pretty sinner than his breviary. To them she disclosed her plan (but without the minutest reference to the ring,) and appointed to each his office, which they all very readily undertook.

Towards evening, as the book-keeper was returning home, he saw, at the turn of a corner, the vicar walking before him with another priest and several people.

"But is it not a pity," he heard one of them say, "that poor Guzman should die so suddenly?"

"It is indeed," answered another, "especially as he thereby had no time to confess his sins before he left the world."

"Aye, poor fellow!" said the vicar. "He was found dead in bed this morning."

"The worst of the business," rejoined the

the other priest, "is that his neighbour the surgeon, who, it is said, read in the stars as in a book, positively asserts, that he last night foretold to him his approaching end almost to a minute, but that he ridiculed the prophecy."

"Heaven have mercy on his soul!" What are we poor mortals? cried the vicar. "Here yesterday, and in the earth to-day."

"True, true," said the other priest. "As to his wife, she should be congratulated, for Guzman has left her money enough to procure a better husband than he ever was. He never cared much for her. But, we should always speak well of the dead, and so, I have done."

Guzman listened to all this, and knew not whether to trust his ears. He resolved to address them, and to ask whether they imagined they were coming from his funeral, or another Guzman had been just

buried. But they, observing his intention, and having nothing more to say, doubled their pace, turned into another street, and escaped him. He then continued his way in a disposition not yet described by any philosopher of our acquaintance. Near the street in which he lived, there was a narrow lane. Through this he had to pass, and here the surgeon and the painter were stationed. As soon as they espied him, the surgeon began: "Yes, I assure you, Gonsalvo, he laughed when I told him that he would not outlive to-day, but I am sure he will not laugh at me now."

"Poor Guzman!" said the painter. "He was thick, and plethoric, and had a short neck. He was fond of the bottle, too. Well! God comfort his poor wife, and us likewise, for we have lost a good friend in him." "Would to Heaven he had believed me!" repeated the surgeon.

Guzman, who was standing behind them,

them, and listening to their conversation, could no longer restrain himself.

“What the devil do you mean?” cried he. “Are you mad? Have they been burying me, when I am — — —”

“The Lord have mercy upon us!” cried the two wags. “It is Guzman himself.” They retreated a few steps. “In the name of all the Saints,” cried the painter, “I conjure thee, oh departed spirit, not to follow us, but to tell us from the place where thou art now standing, what is thy will.”

The surgeon shrieked, and fled, when Guzman, regardless of the painter’s conjurations ran towards him. He thought it better to avoid a conflict, and followed the astrologer with all possible speed.

“Are the people insane, or am I?” exclaimed the book-keeper, who no longer knew what to think. If he did not resemble a dead man, he might have been suspected

pected to be dying, so feebly did he reel to the end of the street. He was now within fifteen or twenty steps of his house, when he saw Antonio come out of it, and walk directly towards him to rob him of the little understanding, which the rest had left him. Antonio seemed not to see him, but walked with mournful solemnity, rivetted his eyes on the earth, and at intervals wiped a tear from them. When he was close to the book-keeper, he raised his eyes, and suddenly started back, as if his foot had touched a viper. "Holy Virgin," cried he, "lend me thy aid! Is that the ghost of Guzman?"

"To be sure it is Guzman," answered he, "but not his ghost. I am alive. Why do you cross and bless yourself? I am Guzman, I tell you; Guzman in soul and body."

Thinking the old man like the others might escape him, he seized his cloak. Antonio, however, cried: "Depart from
me,

me, Satan! *Abrenuntio! Abrenuntio!*" With these words he released himself from the cloak, left it behind him, and ran away with all his speed.

Little was now wanting fully to deprive poor Guzman of his senses. "I must be dead," said he to himself. "Yes, it is beyond a doubt that I am dead.— —I should be a fool if I were any longer to disbelieve it.— —But if I be dead, what am I doing here? And I did not see the Devil in my last moments, as my Confessor used to tell me that I should.— —Am I dead, or not? God knows best what I am. But if I were a soul, a mere soul, and my body in the earth, what could I have to do with clothes—and my own common clothes too?—I can hear and see; and I feel that it is cold, and that it is begining to rain.— —I know nothing of any other world than this.— All I know is that my best friends and companions run away from me, and say I am dead. Are they playing me a Carnival trick?

trick? That is possible; for why do my friends run away and nobody else?—What a fool I am! How can people be afraid of me, who do not know me? Oh! I certainly am dead, but, mercy on me, how could I leave the world without knowing any thing of the matter?"

While he thus argued with himself *pro* and *con* a young man happened to be passing. Guzman seized his arm, and said: "Tell me, friend,—am I dead or alive?"

"You are a fool," replied the man, and tore himself loose.

"God knows I am," said the book-keeper.

He at last resolved to go to his house. It was, indeed, time he should; for it was already dark, and the rain increasing. He knocked violently at the door. A maid asked in a whining voice, who was there?

"Open the door, Laura" cried he.

"Go,

"Go, you impudent fellow," answered she. "Are you not ashamed to make such a noise, when my master is but just buried?"

"What, you flut! open the door, I say. I am your master, and I am wet to the skin."

"You, my master! I wish you were.—but he, poor man is in Heaven, I trust, unless the devil was just then in want of a book-keeper. Then, mercy on him, for he was so fond of his books that he never allowed himself time even to think of his wife—still less of his soul."

Guzman was naturally violent. He kicked at the door 'till it flew open. As soon as Laura saw him, she ran up stairs shrieking with all her might. Leonora, clothed from head to foot in the deepest mourning, came from her chamber, as if to enquire the cause of the alarm. "Oh Madam, I shall die," cried Laura. "I've seen my master's ghost."

Meanwhile

Meanwhile Guzman had walked up stairs. "Jesu Maria!" cried Leonora, as soon as she espied him, and sunk to the earth in a swoon. The maid ran into a room and locked the door.

The poor fool was now convinced that he certainly was dead. He, however, endeavoured to compose himself and to assist his wife. He took her in his arms, and carried her into her chamber. Here fresh reasons for conviction awaited him. The room was hung with black cloth, and the curtains were down. The sight had such an effect upon him, that he almost let his wife fall. "I am dead," cried he. "By my poor soul—God forgive me—I certainly am dead."

His wife had the greatest trouble in the world to refrain from laughing. He laid her on the bed, took a lamp from the table, ran into her dressing-room, brought a bottle, rubbed her temples, shook her, and held the spirits to her nose. At length
she

she opened her eyes, but on seeing her husband, uttered a loud cry, and again swooned. He renewed his assistance but in vain, and after every endeavour, was obliged to leave her to herself.—An hour had now elapsed beyond his usual time of supping, and he felt hungry. He rung for his servant, but Pedro did not come. Leonora, who could not confide in him, had sent him, under some pretence, to a country-house, belonging to Guzman. Laura, Anna, Margareta were called, but did not appear. His hunger increased. He went to the servants' room, but the maids were well instructed in their parts, and were singing a hymn for the repose of the dead. The more he knocked, the louder he demanded something to eat, the louder they sang their *requiem*.

“If it were true,” cried he, “that a spirit can fly through a key-hole, I would litanize you with a vengeance, you squalling sluts.”

E

He

He had no other resource, but to go himself to the larder, where he found some veal, of which he distinctly recollected to have swallowed a good share on the preceding evening. He descended into the cellar, and filled a bottle of wine. He then returned to his chamber, and eat his supper with a hearty appetite, now and then addressing himself to the bottle.

“I must confess,” said he to himself, “death is not so bad a business as people think. I can eat—I can drink—I can—suppose I fill my bottle again. The only hardship is that a dead man must wait upon himself, but my venerable confessor, Father Alvarez, always used to say that there was to be no distinction of persons in the next world.”

He fetched the second bottle, and drank glass after glass, exclaiming repeatedly that the wine never was half so palatable while he was alive. At length, he began to feel its effects.

“I

"I declare," said he, "every thing is as natural as if I was not dead. I never, for the life of me, could weather it as far as the third bottle."

He staggered once or twice up and down the room.—

"Aye," said he, "my legs won't bear me. It is the same in one world as another, I see. Well I can eat and drink—I'll try whether I can sleep too." The wine had now merely left him sufficient power over himself to cast off his clothes. He had some trouble before he reached the bed, because he was feeling for it (see he could no longer) at the wrong side of the room. At length he found it, stretched himself at the side of his wife, and was almost immediately fast asleep. Leonora, was no sooner convinced of this, than she arose, and, assisted by her servants, removed the black tapestry, laid aside her weeds, and indeed disposed of every thing which bore any resemblance to mourning.

She then retired again to bed, and slept composedly 'till morning.

Day broke, and Guzman seemed not at all disposed to awake. Leonora dressed herself, and let him rest 'till the time was past, at which he usually went to the counting house. She then shook him until he opened his heavy eye-lids. He stretched himself, yawned once or twice, and had some trouble in coming to himself, for his wife had just disturbed him in a dream about purgatory. But, as soon as he saw his chamber in its usual state, and Leonora in her usual dress, he rubbed his eyes: "Hem." spluttered he, "Surely I am awake!"—He rubbed them again, and all appeared the same.

"Tell me, my love," said he, "what this means. Are you dead too? Were you with me when I died? How did I die? For, I swear to you, my dear Leonora, that I am completely ignorant how

I left

I left the world, how I was buried, or how my room and bed were conveyed hither?"

"I must confess," replied Leonora, "that Carnival makes you full of jokes this year. But, come! You must rise. Your master will not know where you are."

"What, Leonora! Am I then not dead? Was I not buried yesterday?"

"I see," answered she, "that you have not slept off the drunkenness of yesterday."

"Wife," cried Guzman, incensed at being contradicted in what he was so thoroughly convinced of, "I am dead—I insist upon it I was buried yesterday. Ask our neighbour the surgeon—ask Laura—Zambulo—Antonio—Gonsalvo—ask any body—nay yourself; for you will scarcely deny that I beheld you last night in deep mourning, that you swooned

as soon as you saw me, that I carried you to bed in my arms, and that I still smell the spirit which I poured on your face."

"I never heard any thing like this in my days," said Leonora. "Did not we last night sup comfortably together?"

"The night before last, wife, cried he, but I am to blame to be angry about it, for I see you are dead like myself, and you can no more believe it to-day, than I could yesterday. Believe me, my dear Leonora, you are dead—you are as dead as I am,—you are indeed."

"Merciful Heavens!" exclaimed Leonora, with every mark of astonishment and distress. "This is more than joke. Laura! Laura! Run directly to our neighbour the surgeon, and tell him to come hither without delay.—Poor dear man! Must I have lived to see him lose his reason?"

"God

"God knows which of us has lost it," answered Guzman.

Laura had scarcely left the house to fetch the surgeon, when the painter and old Antonio arrived. Both were very curious to know how the farce proceeded. Leonora with great sorrow related to them the strange chimeras of her husband, who not only fancied himself dead, but insisted upon her being so too."

"I am glad you are come ;" said the book-keeper, "for you know I am dead."

His friends assured him, that, on the contrary, he looked very healthy, was at his own house in Madrid, and to all appearance not about to leave it for a habitation in another world."

"For Heaven's sake," said they, "banish these ideas, lest, if they become public, you be seized, and confined as a madman."

"Who

"Who the devil ever heard the like?" cried Guzman. "I tell you nothing is more certain than that I am dead. Neighbour" continued he to the surgeon, who just entered the room, "come nearer, and tell these obstinate people whether I am alive or dead."

"Alive, without doubt, as far as I can see," replied the surgeon. "But why did you urge me to come so immediately, madam."

"You hear that my husband has lost his senses," answered she. "I have the fullest confidence in your skill and abilities. Try every means to restore him. Oh that I knew what had robbed my dear Guzman of his reason!"

"Nothing is more easily accounted for," rejoined the surgeon. "Could it well be otherwise? Consider, madam, were you to chain yourself for life to a desk, to be for ever buried among drafts, letters, invoices, journals, ledgers, speculations,

culations, &c. &c. &c. thinking of nothing but per cents, profits and usury—were you so thoroughly to devote your mind to these pursuits as to forget your God, your husband and yourself—were you to weaken your nerves by strong liquors, and constantly deprive yourself of that grand requisite to health, exercise—consider madam, I say, whether it can be surprising that your faculties should be thereby injured. *Vita sedentaria et laboriosa; diaeta vinosae; curae anxiae, aliaque animi pathemata; vigi*—oh—I recollect, madam, you do not understand Latin, but I have sufficiently explained Signor Guzman's disorders, and I must add that there can be no chance of recovery without a radical change in his mode of life; for, in a word, his complaint is of the hypochondriac kind. The infernal love of gain has disordered his intellects. I will, however, exert my utmost skill towards his cure, but I must repeat, that without a change in his mode of life, every exertion on my part must be fruitless."

This

This pathological and therapeutic discourse from a man, on whose medical abilities our book-keeper had always placed a great reliance, had a very great effect upon him. He was no longer so thoroughly convinced of his death, though much galled at being considered and treated as a lunatic. But, recollecting his reasons for supposing himself dead, he was again very much inclined to disbelieve every thing, which was passing around him.

“If I be, then,” cried he, “as you all assert, really alive, I should like to know why every one of you yesterday, as soon as he saw me, crossed himself, and ran as if the devil had been at his heels?”

“How!” cried the painter. “These gentlemen must answer for themselves, but, for my part, I must declare I have never seen you since St. Blasius’s day. I have been, during the whole time, employed on a large painting in the church
of

of Villaverde, and the vicar of that place can testify that 'till this morning I have not been at Madrid."

"And I," said Antonio, "was engaged all yesterday and 'till midnight in writing letters to Alcala and Saragossa, which my good friend the Licentiate Don Christoval de Torriga, whom you know, this morning took with him. Therefore, as I did not see you yesterday, I could not run away from you."

"And you did not leave your cloak in my hand?"

"My cloak!" exclaimed Antonio. "Economy forbid!"

"Well," said Guzman, "Heaven knows how it is;—And you, Leonora, were not in widow's weeds?"

"God forbid I ever should," answered she.

"And

"And you did not swoon at sight of me," demanded he.

"Never in my life, that I recollect," replied Leonora.

"It would provoke a saint," cried Guzman. "Now, neighbour, tell me the truth. Did not you the night before last assure me that I looked most wretchedly, and had not more than four and twenty hours to live? Were you not offended because I reminded you of Alonzo Sanchez's wife, and did not you run away from me quicker than Gonsalvo?"

"You will not believe any one," returned the astrologer. "What therefore will it avail, if I assure you that during a whole week I have not been out of my study. Ask any one in my house, and you will find that I have been so much confined and engaged by a particular process for several days, as scarcely to find time for a meal. Come, my dear friend, recollect

recollect yourself. Your complaint has clouded your faculties, and all the strange tales, which you have related to us, must have happened to you in a dream, which is often more lively and impressive in your complaint than in any other."

"Would to Heaven it were but a dream," said Guzman, with a sigh. "Call that baggage Laura."

Leonora rung, and Laura came.

"Come hither" cried he, and raised himself in bed—"come nearer. Tell me, you Neopolitan huffy—and God forgive you if you lie—tell me, I say what passed between you and me last night."

"Lord, sir," answered Laura, "how you frighten one! You know Signor, I was standing in the hall, when you came home, with a pair of stockings in my hand—and so you told me to tell Pedro that he must bring supper directly—and so I called Pedro, and so—"

F

"And

"And so," cried Guzman, "I'll twist your head off your shoulders, if you don't confess the truth, you Italian flut. Did not I wait like a fool in the rain 'till you had finished your abuse—"

"Why, Lord, Signor," answered she, "we never exchanged a word 'till you met me in the hall, and said you wanted supper—and so I called: "Pedro, come hither! My master wants:"—

"Out of my sight, you baggage, or, I'll make you sing a hymn not much like that of last night."

Laura did not wait a second hint.

"Come, said the surgeon. Dress yourself, and let us take a walk. You will then find that your death is the most laughable whim which ever entered into the mind of an hypocondriac."—

Guzman dressed himself, drank a cup of chocolate, and went with them. He met
various

various friends and acquaintance, who bowed to him as usual, which convinced him that his death was merely a dream.

“For,” argued he with himself, “were I dead and buried, my nearest neighbours would surely know it. But, no one, certainly, ever had so natural and lively a dream. It still seems as if it were all before me.”

The most powerful conviction to his mind was the testimony of the vicar Zambulo, whom they met during their walk.

“Signor Licenciado,” cried he, as soon as he saw him, “whom did you bury yesterday?” Zambulo solemnly assured him that he had buried nobody yesterday, or the day before.—The whole farce was now acted again.

The other priest, whom Guzman declared to have seen with the Licentiate was summoned, who maintained the tale agreed upon. Thus was Guzman convinced that

his health had been injured by a too close application to business. He, therefore, promised his wife and friends, (who were very importunate on the subject) that he would resign his employment, and devote the remainder of his days to domestic ease. This was the grand object of Leonora's wishes, and she already saw the ring upon her finger.—

We know not what may be the opinion of our readers on the conduct of Leonora. For our part, though it would be easy to declare our sentiments, we rather decline it at present, or perhaps entirely, in order that we may not influence the opinions of our good-natured friends, or give our enemies (whom, humble as is our opinion of ourselves, we shall as little fail to have as the great Don Miguel Cervantes, whose name ought always to be printed in golden letters) an opportunity of contradicting us. Should the aforementioned gentry, however, consider what we have said from the words "*We know not*"

not" to be a digression, we beg leave humbly to state that it is not a digression, but an introduction to the second part of our narrative, and that we mean the present sentence to be considered as a note.

Proud as Leonora might be of her invention, Theresa was not in the least at a loss. The only point, in which she envied her friend, was her success; for though she placed a firm reliance on her cunning, yet could she not be positive that it would effect the wished-for alteration in Gonzalvo's mode of life. It was, likewise, a very unpleasant circumstance both to her and Antonio's wife, that Leonora, to effect the reform in her husband's conduct, had availed herself of their husbands' aid, for, it was to be feared that they would on that account more easily detect an imposition. Perhaps this, too, was Leonora's intention, but she did not reflect that it would be still more to their credit, if notwithstanding this hindrance, they effected their purpose.

While the book-keeper was repenting his sins, and endeavouring to drive from his remembrance the dreams which he fancied to have haunted his imagination, Theresa, by means of her brother, had a new front-door made by a joiner who lived in a remote part of the town, which was exactly of the same size as that belonging to the painter's house. The lock and hinges were procured of a smith, equally unknown. These were privately brought one evening, while Gonfalvo was at a tavern, and secreted in the house. On the day appointed for the execution of the scheme, came Theresa's brother, a complete wag, (who was never more at home than when engaged in a frolic of this kind) with a few friends at least as wild as himself, and they concealed themselves 'till their assistance was necessary. Towards evening, Gonfalvo arrived from a convent, where he had been delineating a few of the innumerable miracles of St. Francis, and a whole length figure of St. Anthony, and was received by his wife
with

with her usual good-humour. They eat their supper as usual in company with old Sarfaganilla, and retired, as usual to bed.

A word, *en passant*. This said Sarfaganilla was a relation of Gonsalvo, and a kind of duenna to his wife. In other respects she was, like most other old women, crafty, deceitful, fond of mischief, and ever ready to promote discord, unless she found her account in doing the contrary. The honest painter, quite unsuspecting of the misfortunes which awaited him, was scarcely in bed ere he snored 'till the walls echoed the hoggish sound. Theresa, on the contrary, big with her project, remained awake 'till midnight. She then began to groan most piteously, and tossed from one side to another, 'till Gonsalvo, although an excellent sleeper, could not but awake.

“Oh! I can bear it no longer! I shall die! I shall die!”

“What

"What is the matter?" demanded her husband. "What is the matter, dear Theresa?"

No other answer could he obtain but a repetition of "I shall die! Oh! I shall die," accompanied by shrieks and groans, which would have moved a stone to compassion.

We know not whether the painter did not in reality conceive his wife's case to be so dangerous as she declared, or whether, like many other husbands, he was accustomed to the overacted complaints made by most wives, if a finger chance to ach a little. Suffice it to say, that he listened to Theresa's groans and cries with great composure, and contented himself with advising her to be patient, with assuring her that the pain would soon subside, and with administering other flimsy consolations of the same nature, which, however, on most sudden attacks among married women, are more effectual than a whole

whole shop-full of salves, plaisters, essences, elixirs, tinctures, electuaries, &c. &c. With Theresa, nevertheless, the coolness of her husband had not at that time the desired effect, although it is so excellent a specific that I myself, who am engaged in writing this work, once thereby recovered my wife from a very violent swoon, and have happily cured her of all such swoons for ever.

Theresa, as we have already hinted, cried louder than before, demanded a confessor, and at last made such a noise that Sarfaganilla ran half naked into the room, exclaiming:

“ Help, Santo Honofrio! What now?”

“ Oh I am lost,” cried Theresa, still louder—“ this colic will tear me in pieces.”

“ Ay” said Sarfaganilla, “ I told you what would be the consequence of eating that fallad.”

She

She now ran to prepare warm cloths, and gave the patient some hot wine, mixed with ginger and cardamums. But all applications external or internal seemed only to make the patient worse, with whose moans and groans Sarfaganilla continually intermixed her sage observations,—such as: “I told you so—I said how it would be.—Thus it is, when people won’t attend to what one says—I’d advise you to eat sallad again—Those, who won’t hear, must feel—” with other learned remarks, which amounted to this—that Theresa would have acted more prudently, if she had not eat any vinegar, because she had before very often experienced that acids disagreed with her.

“Why you know,” said Theresa, “I only eat that little morsel of sallad, because my husband obliged me to do it. You know I never can refuse him any thing.”

“You feel the consequences,” muttered she between her——teeth we had almost

almost said, which would have been as great a falsehood as was ever uttered, for Sarfaganilla had not a tooth left, unless we acknowledge as teeth two coal-black roots, which just peeped out of her gums.

Meanwhile, the complaint increased, and the painter, who 'till now had listened very calmly, at last arose, though evidently against his inclination, for he was at least as fond of his bed as of his wine.

“What a noise,” cried he, “does she make about a little colic! Give her a draught of brandy.”

With these words he opened a closet, took out a bottle, filled a cup from it, and held it under his wife's nose.

“Drink, Theresa—this will do you good.”

Theresa put her lips to the cup, but immediately withdrew them again, and made not a few ugly grimaces.

“Come,

"Come, come," said Gonfalso, take it at one swallow."

She then just wetted her lips with it.

"Ah!—It tastes like death," cried she.

"Pshaw! said the painter, "it tastes like brandy. Sarfaganilla, make her drink it."

"I'd rather die than drink any thing so nasty," exclaimed Theresa.

"Well then, let it alone," said her husband. "What must I do with it? Such liquor ought not to be wasted."

He then drank the brandy, and locked the closet.

"Who ever heard the like?" cried Sarfaganilla. "To get drunk when his wife is dying! St. Peter preserve me from such a husband, if I should ever marry."

"Don't be afraid," said Gonfalso, laying his hand on the old virgin's shoulder.

The

The disorder, meanwhile, did not abate, and some further applications, recommended by the duenna, were rejected.

“ Oh that Riachuela was here !” cried Theresa. “ She could restore me, if any body can.”

“ That’s a lucky thought,” returned the duenna. “ She has always been of use to you.”

“ If I but live ’till she comes, I—oh—it feels as if a thousand knives were plunged into my vitals.”

“ One would be enough,” said the painter, in a low voice.

“ We must send for her directly,” rejoined Sarfaganilla.

We ought long ago to have informed our readers that Gonsalvo had but one maid, who, at Theresa’s request, and by his permission, was gone, a day or two before the present period, to see her

G

friends

friends at a village not far from Madrid. There was no one, therefore, to fetch Riachuela but the painter himself, on which very circumstance our sick heroine had founded her plan.

“ Oh my dear husband, if you would but do me the favour—”

“ He will, of course, with pleasure,” said Sarfaganilla.

“ But he won’t,” rejoined Gonsalvo.

“ Heaven have mercy on us !” cried the pious duenna. “ He can see his wife at the last gasp, and won’t go a few steps to save her.”

“ I don’t know what you call a few steps,” answered the painter. “ Riachuela lives in the *Calle de las Carretas*.”

“ No, she has removed to the *Calle de Fuencral*,” returned Theresa.

“ Why, that is still further,” said Gonsalvo,

salvo, "and is besides a street without an end, as one may say. How can you expect me, when every house is shut up, to find an old woman in such a street as that?"

"Well" cried the patient, "I must die, then. Riachuela knows my constitution, and could — — oh — oh" —

"Go, for Heaven's and St. Peter's sake," cried Sarfaganilla.

"Be quiet, I tell you, and don't ask me to go to the other end of the city at such an hour and in such weather. It rains so fast that I would not turn a dog out of my doors, and it would take me above half an hour to walk from this street to the *Calle de Fuencral*."

"What a husband!" cried Theresa. "He would rather see me die than walk half an hour to save me. But I know what it means. You are tired of me, and wish to be rid of me. Come then, mon-

ster, lie down, and sleep. But mark this, if I do die, I believe I die by your hands. Who knows what you had mixed in the fallad, which you so often asked me to eat? You are not, at other times, so mighty civil."

The painter, who by no means thought his wife so ill as she declared, was incensed beyond all bounds, when she advanced such an accusation.

"Wife" cried he, "I advise you to beware what you say, or I"—"I say it again," interrupted she, "and will say it to all the world. You have poisoned me."

"I warn you wife!" cried Gonfalso, "to hold your tongue, lest I chastise you."

"What!" bellowed Sarfaganilla, "Threaten to beat a woman at the point of death! Your own wife too, dying—God knows by whose means—I say no more."

The

The painter's patience was now exhausted. He looked round for an instrument, and had he found one (little as he was in general disposed to violence) he certainly would have given the duenna a few tokens of remembrance. She, however, satisfied in having cause for alarm, ran away and bawled as loud as she was able. The patient bawled still louder, talked of poison, and called for Riachuela. This terrible noise, as the woman had supposed, confused the painter. He was afraid that the neighbourhood might be alarmed, and that her constant cries of "I am dying—I am poisoned" might, if her complaint were really more serious than he imagined, bring him (especially in case of her death) into an awkward predicament.

"For Heaven's sake, Theresa," said he, "be quiet, and I will go for Riachuela."

"Yes, now you see—oh—that I am
G 3 dying

dying—oh—if it had been to a tavern—you would have gone sooner.”

He took his cloak and a lantern, and went, wishing Riachuela and all other old women at the devil. He had heard that she lived in the *Calle de Fuencral*, but in what part of it he did not know. He had to walk almost the whole length of the city, and then to traverse the aforesaid long *Calle de Fuencral*. The rain had made the streets, (which are always dirtier at Madrid than at any other place in the world) knee-deep, and he was wet thro’ his shirt before he had wandered through two thirds of his pilgrimage. We will leave him for a moment to his walk, while we see how Theresa goes on.

The painter had scarcely turned his back, when she was perfectly restored to health, and Sarfaganilla collected the assistants in her project. The old front-door was taken down, and the new one substituted. The whole house was illuminated, and

and a large sign, painted expressly for the occasion, was hung out. The neighbours, with whom the plan had been concerted, assembled to a splendid supper. Music was introduced, and as soon as the company rose from table, Theresa opened the ball with her brother, and Sarfaganilla, who had not been so merry for many a day, hobbled through the dance with the rest.

Meanwhile, poor Gonsalvo wandered up one side of the *Calle de Fuencral* and down the other, knocked at every house, waked every body, and enquired where Riachuela lived. Some cursed him for disturbing them—others laughed at him, and the civillest did not know any thing of such a person. At last, weary of fruitless enquiries, and very much out of humour, he again bent his way towards home. Tired, wet to the skin, shivering with cold, and covered with dirt, he at length reached the street in which he lived but how he looked, when he saw every
room

room in his house illuminated, and heard the music and dancing, we shall not attempt to describe. As he was about to knock, he espied a door quite unknown to him, beautifully painted, and ornamented with elegant carved-work.

“What the devil is this?” cried he, and held his lanthorn, so as to have a full survey of the door from the bottom to the top. As he raised his eyes, he could not but observe the sign, which denoted that the house was a tavern. It was purposely hung in such a way that the light fell upon it from the windows, and the painter very distinctly read: “THE PRINCE OF ASTURIA.” He now thought that he must have been deceived by the darkness of the night, and that he was in a wrong street. He returned to the end of it, but all he saw convinced him that, as to the street, there could be no mistake. He counted every house, from the corner to his own, in order to be thoroughly convinced.

“Here

"Here lives Don Garcias," said he, "here Riquemado the merchant, here Gulielmo Espuelo, here Alonzo Rienda," and so forth, till he reached his own house. "Here my house ought to stand between the secretary's and the apothecary's, exactly opposite Don Gomez de Quedo's, and here stands a tavern.—I don't understand it."

He once more surveyed the house from top to bottom, and understood as little as before.

"There never was a tavern in this street since I was born," said he, "how the devil happens my house to have that honour conferred upon it in the course of two hours? I left my wife at the point of death with nobody in the house but Sarfaganilla, and on my return find an illumination and a ball.—I don't feel as if I were either drunk or asleep. Whether I am bewitched is another question. Well! I'll see who gives this ball at my house, however."

He

He knocked at the door, but the instruments were so loud that he was not heard. He knocked more violently—no one would hear him. At last he so completely stormed the house with the knocker and his feet, that a waiter peeped out of a window above, and said :

“Signor Estrangero, we have no room for you. Every chamber is occupied. You will please to look for other quarters.”

“What the devil are you talking about ?” cried the painter, “This house is mine. Open the door, or I’ll break your neck.”

“You are drunk,” answered the waiter “and if you don’t mean us to quarrel, I would advise you to be gone ; for if you make any further noise at this door, you shall feel the consequences.”

With these words he closed the window violently, while the painter uttered
curse

curfes and execrations. The light in his lantern was nearly extinguished: The rain, and the water, which poured in torrents from the roofs, completely drenched him: The wind was so boisterious that he could scarcely keep his feet. All these circumstances prompted him to knock again with the utmost violence.

"Martin," cried a voice within, "take a stick and break that rascal's bones, who makes such a noise at the door."

"Directly," answered another voice.

The front door then opened, and a waiter appeared with a broom-staff in his hand.

"What do you mean," cried he, "you drunken scoundrel? We have no room for you. Begone, or I'll thresh you, 'till you are black and blue."

"Sir," returned the painter, "I do not wish to be a lodger here. This is my own house. It was left by my grandfather

ther Christoval Chico to my father Miguel Chico—and by him to me. I went from it but two hours ago to fetch one Riachuela, and, at my return, find it converted into a tavern. Pray sir, explain to me how this comes to pass.”

“What does the fellow mean,” cried the pretended waiter, “by his house and his Christovals and Miguels? “Go, go, before I apply this stick to your shoulders.”

“Sir,” replied the painter, who felt disposed to be very submissive at the sight of so sturdy a weapon in the hand of so sturdy an antagonist, “Sir, I can swear that this house was mine only two hours since. My name is Gonsalvo Chico, and I at that time left my wife very ill, in it. My wife is called Theresa Pietro—unless she has changed it within two hours, or is herself metamorphosed into a tavern, and except the door and sign, which probably belong to Belzebub, this is my house, as all the world knows.”

“Thou

"Thou varlet," returned the waiter, "this house has been a tavern as long as I can recollect, and one of the first in the city too. My master's name is Hernando Taja, his wife's Blanca Majans and mine Martin Hierros. I served my present master's father-in-law several years in this same house. I therefore know the house, and know that you are a blockhead.—Go to the gallows, Signor Gonsalvo Chico, or Gonsalvo Diabolo. If I didn't pity your folly, I would break this stick across your shoulders."

He then went into the house, and barred the door.—The poor painter was thunderstruck, and dared not knock again. He at last resolved to go to his friend Antonio, who lived not far off.—He groped through the dark, for his light was extinguished. In the middle of the street the water was almost deep enough to drown him, and at the sides, it poured in torrents from the roofs. At last, after having once or twice bathed his face in

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the

the dirt, he reached his friend's house.—It was three hours after midnight, and he knocked some time before he awoke his friend. Antonio, who never had any thing but horns before his eyes at night, concluded that this visit, at so unusual an hour, must have some reference to his wife. He therefore suffered the painter for some time to knock unheeded, but as poor Gonfalso's blows at the door increased with his impatience, Antonio at last arose, and put his nose out of the window with great caution.

“For Heaven's sake, Antonio,” cried the poor painter, “open the door.—I am your half-perished friend Gonfalso.”

Antonio was astonished, instantly released his wife from the sack which we have before mentioned, and hastened to admit his friend. Francisca soon divined a part of the story, but affected total ignorance, and asked, as eagerly as her husband, how he happened to appear in such a wet and dirty state, at such an hour.

“You

"You shall know all," said the painter, "if you will but first give me some dry clothes."

A good fire was now made, and Gonsalvo having changed his dress, and drank a cup of chocolate, related his adventures. Antonio, who thought he was inebriated, and Francisca, who pretended to think the same, began to mock the poor painter, and the more energetically he avowed the truth of his narrative, the louder were their taunts. "Were it not such a stormy night," said the old man, "I would myself accompany you home, and you would soon discover that all these miraculous alterations exist but in your own intoxicated brain. Alicant wine is a bewitching liquor, my Gonsalvo. You seem to have had too much of it in your head, good friend, and therefore naturally enough mistook your house for a tavern. Go to bed for a few hours, and when your head is quite clear, we will try how a breakfast tastes at the Prince of Asturia's hotel."

The old man now took a light, and conducted his friend to his bed-room, wished him good night, and hoped that Martin Hierros and the broom-staff would not appear to him in his dreams. He then returned to his wife, fastened her in the sack, and lay down, not without many a burst of laughter at the diverting folly of Gonsalvo, which he still ascribed entirely to intoxication.

Full of his adventures as was the painter's imagination, he, nevertheless, was scarcely in bed, before he sunk, overpowered by the difficulties which he had encountered, into a deep sleep, and would probably have snored 'till mid-day, had not Antonio roused him at nine o'clock.

"Rise, and dress yourself," cried he. "Have you forgotten that we are to breakfast at your new tavern? Oh what a delightful entertainment we shall have! No better chocolate can be found in Christendom than at Signor Hernando Taja's,
and

and his wife Blanca Majans is the nicest little woman in the world. They have the best waiter under the sun too,—one Martin Hierros. You'll like Martin vastly, I assure you."

The painter rose, and was not much better received by his friend's wife. He, however, submitted to all their derision, maintaining that every part of his narrative was strictly as he had before described it. Antonio, who expected that these chimeras would have evaporated with the wine, was astonished that Gonsalvo, after five hour's repose, should still declare every circumstance to be true, and determined to satisfy his curiosity by accompanying his friend home immediately.—Francisca, who certainly saw furthest into this mystery, pretended the greatest disbelief, and requested, at their departure, that they would present her respects to Signora Blanca Majans. "And don't forget, landlord," continued she, as they descended the steps, "to tell

Martin Hierros that he treated the Signor Estrangero very properly."

Theresa, on her part, was no sooner convinced that Martin's eloquence and weapon had produced the desired effect of driving the painter away, than, by the assistance of her brother, she replaced the old door, took the sign down, put every thing in order, and dismissed the musicians as well as her guests, who all promised the most inviolable secrecy. She then retired with Sarfaganilla to bed, and slept till it was broad day.

As soon as the painter, in company with Antonio, arrived at his house, and found the usual door, without the slightest appearance of a tavern, he was again obliged to undergo the raillery of his friend. They knocked, and Sarfaganilla opened the door.

"What !" cried she, St. Honori help us ! Why, surely you won't have the audacity to appear before your wife ! After
leaving

leaving her at twelve almost dead, not to return 'till ten in the morning ! I thought she would have died twenty times. Heaven defend every woman from such a rake of a husband ! But you'll have it, I promise you. I say no more."

"It will be better for you, if you do say no more," answered Gonfalso, "and if you open your mouth again within four and twenty hours, I advise you to have your will made before hand."

He went up stairs with Antonio, but scarcely had he entered his chamber, when his wife sprung out of bed, and poured forth such a volley of reproaches, that we should find it as difficult to recite one third of them, as her hearers found it to understand one half. The painter, who, from Sarfaganilla's prelude, expected such a storm, put his left hand in his pocket, and leaned with his right upon Antonio's shoulder. In this careless attitude, he listened very composedly to his wife, perceiving that any attempt to silence her
would

would be ineffectual. At length the current of her eloquence began to ebb a little, and the following words were distinctly heard :

“ Tell me, sir, tell me, I say, in what infamous place you have passed the night. But no, I don't wish to know, for a pretty tale it would be, no doubt. Of course you were in good company, where the time did not pass so tediously as with your poor sick wife. Yes, sir—I know your ways.”

The painter still listened to her, or rather did not listen, for he was racking his brains to discover how his house could in the night have been metamorphosed into a tavern, without his wife, whom he left in it, having been at all aware of the change. Theresa, however proceeded :

“ I should like to know, Signor Antonio, what can have brought you hither with this abandoned man. But, no doubt he wanted you to intercede in his behalf.—

If

If so, I tell you at once that you are come in vain, for as true as I am alive, I will not live under the same roof with him. I'll do something of which the whole town shall talk. I'll go directly, and apply for a separation. I shall not wait for the consequences of another such fallad. Thank God, I have escaped once. Give me my clothes, Sarfaganilla. Not another hour will I live in the same house with such a man."

"Wife," said Gonfalso, "it may appear to you that you have reason to complain, but I tell you that you have none, and I am not disposed any longer to listen to your abuse."

"I beseech you, Signora," said Antonio "compose yourself. I pledge to you my honour that he is not to blame. I am not superstitious, but I am convinced that there is something supernatural in this affair."

"Yes, yes," said Theresa, "of course
he

he knows how to tell his own tale, and you may believe it, if you like."

Antonio was, however, so urgent, that at last she consented to hear an account of the miraculous circumstances, which had occurred, of which her husband gave an exact description.

"What!" cried she. "Am I to be imposed upon by such abominable inventions as these? Music and dancing! Yes, forsooth, the only music to be heard here, was the groans of a woman on her death-bed, as I may say."

"Ay," added Sarfaganilla, "she might have been heard to the end of the street."

"Sarfaganilla," said the painter in a warning tone, "remember the advice I gave you."

Antonio now corroborated his friend's declaration by informing Theresa that he had given him the very same description,
when

when he admitted him half dead into his house at three o'clock in the morning.

"You see, now, Theresa," said the painter, "what a night I have passed, and I declare, unaccountable as it may seem to you, the whole account is literally true. The devil, I am sure, is concerned in this house, and I am thoroughly resolved without delay to leave and let it."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Sarfaganilla. How could you expect anything else in a house that has been haunted so long?"

"Haunted!" cried Theresa. "Why did you never tell me that before?"

"Because I was afraid you would laugh at me," answered she.

"That is like most of your actions," retorted Gonfalso, "absurd and ridiculous. You might have spared us all our present dispute by speaking sooner."

"Why

“Why should I, Signor,” said Sarfaganilla, “abuse a house, in which I have always experienced so much kindness, except last night—but that was probably the devil’s fault; for you are not generally so ill-natured. Or, why should I subject myself to be called an old witch again, which was the name you once gave me, because I said that a good Christian ought always to step out of bed with the right foot foremost.”

“To be sure,” rejoined Theresa, in a calmer tone than before, “there can be no great wonder at the devil chusing this house as a place of revelling, when I consider its owner’s way of living. You, Signor Antonio, know that he is always wandering from one tavern to another, and afterwards to houses worse than taverns. Where is the wonder that the devil should take possession of the house, if the master never troubles his head about it?”

Antonio,

Antonio, who (setting aside his jealousy) was a very worthy man, and whose mind (as is the case with most of his countrymen,) was tolerably tinctured with superstition, had ever observed the irregular life of his friend with displeasure, and had many times talked to him on the subject both seriously and jocosely. This therefore was a happy opportunity to preach the doctrine of repentance. Theresa was extremely glad to find that chance had procured her such powerful aid ; as the harsh truths, which the painter was now obliged to hear, had far greater effect, than if they had proceeded from a wife, mortified by his irregularities and for whom he had perhaps not much regard.

Antonio, having now finished his harangue, and Theresa perceiving that her husband was not a little agitated, she began to address him in a way not much like that with which she had received him. She affected to believe all he related, and

I

ascribed

ascribed it to the interference of Heaven, for the purpose of reclaiming him. She besought and conjured him to become another man—not for her sake, although her conduct towards him deserved it,—but for the sake of himself, his reputation, and his soul. No wife, she said, could love a husband more sincerely. What then must she feel, when she saw him sacrificing his health, his honour and his property in so thoughtless a way?—This was her preface. She proceeded with that soft persuasive eloquence, which makes a woman so irresistible, that it seems as if Heaven had endowed the otherwise defenceless sex with it, as a substitute for all arms. And, by the way, it is not a little astonishing that most married ladies should so seldom make use of these conquering weapons, but that what we should be unable to deny, if supported by persuasive gentleness, they should endeavour to wrench from us by violence and defiance,—and often endeavour in vain. Is it not a perverted kind of ambition, to try

to enforce obedience by over-bearing authority rather than——but let us not digress too far.

Theresa, as we have said, proceeded with mild convincing argument. She depicted in the most lively colours that domestic felicity, which she had never known, but which Gonfalso might so easily confer and enjoy. She contrasted the consequences of a dissipated life and respectable conduct so forcibly, that he was quite overpowered. She now had recourse to the most tender endearments and to tears——not to tears of powerless fury, frustrated defiance, and unheeded obstinacy, but those irresistible tears of sorrowful compassion, which are the certain marks of an exalted mind. With these, which really proceeded from her heart, she conjured him no longer to oppose the opportunity of securing his own temporal and eternal happiness; for her happiness was also gone for ever, if, by proceeding as hitherto, he drove her to

despair. "Your's will be the blame, and you must answer for it," added the amiable woman, and clasped his knees. "Gonsalvo, dear, dear Gonsalvo, resolve to be happy, resolve to make a wife happy, who would willingly lay down her life for you."

In this last scene we see Theresa in her real form. She loved her husband sincerely and ardently. Her heart had bled while she was engaged in the frolic, and she would not perhaps (great as was her desire to possess the ring,) have executed it, had she not at the same time aimed at his reformation. This, she knew, could never be effected, by remonstrances—she, therefore, determined to make a forcible appeal to his conscience.

Theresa had spoken from her heart, and tremblingly awaited the result of her plan, for this was the decisive moment.

"Take my life, Theresa,"—cried Gonsalvo, and raised her from the earth,

earth. "Lovely noble creature, how little have I known thee! Who could resist that sweet eloquence and those tears?"

He pressed her to his heart, kissed the tears from her cheeks (which now flowed for joy) begged her forgiveness, and promised in future to live for her alone.

"God and St. Honofrio grant it," cried Sarfaganilla, "St. Peter, and all the saints of Heaven!"

"Amen," said Antonio, who ascribed to his solemn discourse not a small share of credit in effecting the reformation.—The painter requested him to fetch his wife to celebrate it, and the day was spent in festivity. On the part of Theresa, it was far pleasanter than the day of her marriage, and she doubted not but that the Marquis de Castromonte would adjudge to her the prize. Gonsalvo, of whom we here take leave, became in reality a regular, virtuous, affectionate husband,

band, and devoted to his wife all the time, which he could spare from his employments as an artist.

And now, welcome, thou careful keeper and unwearied centinel of the beautiful Francisca, vigilant Antonio Cerro, inventor of the famous sack!—Or rather, welcome, thou, with all thy inventive faculties, lovely, smiling, sweet Francisca Ortez, who could'st boldly undertake to heal a jealous heart, to free thyself from the ignominious sack, and to make thyself worthy of the diamond-ring.

Francisca had a brother called Philip. This worthy, pious, sensible, and exemplary man was a Franciscan friar, and an honour to his order. He had hitherto lived in a remote cloister, and was but lately come to Madrid, in order to be the Superior there. Before his arrival, Francisca had, by means of Leonora, always corresponded with him, and since he had been at Madrid, had twice seen him privately.

Antonio

Antonio hated his brother-in-law, as well as the whole order to which he belonged.

His hatred towards the former had its origin as follows. Father Philip, when consulted by letter, strenuously opposed the marriage of his sister to Antonio, on the score of the great disparity in their ages. In his opinion (to which we very readily subscribe) a marriage, which was to be productive of happiness, bore this resemblance to a play, that as three *unities* were necessary to the one, so were three *similarities* to the other, viz : similarity of age, sentiments, and fortune. Of these three the similarity of age was certainly the most essential. If that were wanting, although the other two were not, dissatisfaction and numberless bad consequences would, nevertheless, ensue. It was, therefore, an unpardonable weakness, if not a folly, in an old man to marry a young girl, and a still greater if not a scandalous weakness in a woman to marry a beardless boy, when old enough to be

be his grandmother.—This letter, addressed by Philip to his parents, (on whom it had no great effect) fell into Antonio's hands some time after his marriage, and was the first foundation of his animosity towards the reverend friar.

The consequences of this marriage having proved as he had foretold, and Francisca, after the death of her parents, having complained to her brother of the grievances, which even then she was obliged to endure, (yet, at that time, the sack was not invented) Father Philip took the liberty of writing a letter to Antonio, in which he strenuously explained the injustice of his conduct, and exhorted him to banish his jealous suspicions. By this letter Antonio thought himself doubly insulted, and solemnly prohibited all intercourse between his wife and her brother. She, however continued her correspondence with him, by the assistance of her friend, as we have already observed.

Antonio

Antonio hated the Franciscan order altogether, because, in his youth his father wanted to force him into it, at the instance of an old cousin, who belonged to it.— He was obliged to enter on his novitiate in a cloister at Toledo, his native place, and must infallibly have accommodated himself to the dreadful vow, had not his father died during the probationary year. He had thereby acquired such an antipathy against the sons of St. Francis, that, as soon as he was out of the cloister, he took a solemn oath never, as long as he lived, to set foot again in a Franciscan church or cloister, and never to suffer one of the order with his knowledge and consent, to enter his house.

Father Philip had not been at Madrid during sixteen years. His brother-in-law had never seen him, and was ignorant that he now resided in the city, for in his presence, his wife durst not mention either her brother or the Franciscan order. This ignorance was of use to our heroine.

She

She found an opportunity of seeing her brother, stated all the hardships imposed upon her by her jealous husband, and took care not to omit the sack. The father Superior tenderly loved his sister, whom he had not seen since her sixth or seventh year. Her complaints pierced to his soul. He exerted all his eloquence in recommendation of patience, but eight years of torture had exhausted it. She declared that she found it impossible any longer to live with such a tyrant,—that she knew only one plan, whereby he could be reclaimed, but that without the Superior's assistance it could not be executed, and was attended with many difficulties. Antonio, she added, did not deserve that so worthy a brother should at all concern himself in his welfare, and her final resolution, therefore, was to release herself by her own hand.—

By this artful manœuvre Francisca warded the argument, which the holy friar was about to advance on the sacred nuptial

nuptial vow, for he now began to arm her conscience against that most impious of crimes—suicide, besought her to unfold her project, and offered his utmost aid.—She suffered him to petition for some time before she disclosed it, and he instantly perceived that it was attended with many difficulties, which, however, were at length overpoised by the lamentable situation of his only much-loved sister, and the fear lest she should execute her dreadful designs upon her own existence.—They, therefore, discussed the subject, and he took leave of her with the promise that he would, on the same day, consult his brethren on the occasion, without whose consent and assistance he could do nothing.

He kept his word, and, immediately on his return to the cloister, convened the chapter. He was a learned, gentle, kind, obliging man, and of course much beloved by the monks. His proposal, therefore, met with little or no resistance.

The

The elder and more pious monks were appeased by the prospect of converting an old sinner, while the younger and less serious enjoyed, by anticipation, the frolic which awaited them. All offered their assistance, and endeavoured in some degree to remove the scruple, which the father Superior himself could not suppress. He gave immediate information of their consent to his sister, and, at the same time, sent her a dose of strong narcotic powder.

Francisca was overjoyed. She failed not at the appointed hour to mix the powder in Antonio's wine, and prevailed on him by a thousand little friendly acts to take a few more glasses than usual. The drugs took effect, before she rose to leave table. Antonio yawned once or twice, muttered a few unintelligible words, and fell so fast asleep that he might have been supposed to be dead. She undressed him with the assistance of her maid, and, having put him to bed, sent an account of every thing to her brother. He immediately

ately came with another friar and several lay-brethren, cut off Antonio's hair in imitation of a monk's tonsure, and clothed him in a Franciscan habit. As soon as his wife beheld him, she could not refrain from laughing, but the Father Superior advised her rather to pray that so good a beginning might be crowned with success. He, then, wished her a good night, and having placed the newly initiated Franciscan in the carriage which had brought him, he returned to the cloister.

As soon as they arrived, poor Antonio was undressed, and laid in the bed prepared for him. His friar's dress was placed near him on a chair; the door was shut, and he was left to his repose, for the effects of the powder were to continue two hours longer.—At the usual time, the bell rung for matins, and was followed

lowed by the Matraca.* The horrible sound roused Antonio.

“ Oh ! What was that ?——Francisca ! Francisca !—Do you hear ?—What was that ?—God have mercy on us ! I believe the roof of the house is falling in.”

He fancied himself in his own bed and at the side of his wife, but, receiving no answer, began to grope around him.——He found no Francisca, and the demon of jealousy instantly took possession of his imagination. He fancied his wife faithless—he saw her in the arms of a lover—he believed that the roof had given way, while he was attempting to make a passage through it—in short, he believed any thing.——These ideas rushed so rapidly through his brain, that they drove him almost mad.

“ Where

* The MATRACA is made of four thin boards. Within them are fastened various pieces of steel, on which several hammers fall. This instrument makes a dreadful noise, and is used in the cloisters to awake those, who may not have heard the bell.

“Where art thou, slut?” cried he, and sprung out of bed. “Where art thou, adulterous wretch?”

He ran towards the door, but found where he expected to find it, nothing but a bare wall, because it was here not in the same part of the room as at his house. He cursed, and stormed, and called to the maid. He ordered her to bring his sword—he groped in search of the door, but as he once more wandered to a wrong quarter, he again found the bed, and now for the first time discovered that he certainly was not in his own room, for the bed was not at all like his. While he was stretching his arms before him, he felt the chair with the clothes upon it. Here his touch at once discovered a difference.

“Where am I?” cried he, “and who, in the devil’s name, has brought me hither?”

He continued his pursuit, sliding his fingers along the wall, ’till he at length found the door. He opened it, went out,
and

and perceived he was in a long wide gallery, on each side of which was a row of doors, distinguishable by a glimmering lamp suspended at the centre of it.—He attempted to open some of the doors, but they were all locked. He attempted to take the lamp in order to examine the chamber, from which he was come, but it was fastened to the roof by a chain.

“Merciful Heavens !” exclaimed he. “Where am I ?——It looks like an hospital. One door close to another, and all locked ! Oh ! Mercy on me ! It must be the hospital *de Locos*.* But how came I here ?—That God knows.—I am not, to my knowledge, either a fool or mad, unless I have lost my senses since yesterday, for I remember very distinctly that I — yes, I certainly eat my supper in my perfect senses—but I don’t recollect to have gone to bed.”

He found it was cold, and returned to
his

* A mad-house.

his cell, in order to search for the clothes, which he had before found. He took them to the lamp, but what was his horror, when he discovered them to be a complete Franciscan habit !

“ Jesus Maria !” cried he, “ What does this mean ? What has happened to me ?”

His whole frame shivered, and his teeth chattered. He nevertheless exclaimed :

“ No. I’ll not put on these clothes, if I be frozen to death.”

He replaced them where he had found them, and was lost in surmises as to his situation.

“ No doubt,” said he, “ the devil is playing me a trick like poor Gonsalvo, who mistook his house for a tavern. Who knows but I may be in my own house without being aware of it ? Yet—I am not a drunkard, I am not a gamester as he was, and I have always been faithful to my wife.”

He ransacked his memory to discover by what sin he had deserved to be thus exposed to the machinations of the devil, but could discover no cause for it whatever, unless he had treated his wife rather too harshly.

“It must be that,” said he. “My suspicions and jealousy have led me too far, for which I am, either like Gonsalvo, blinded by Satan, or even conveyed as a lunatic to the hospital *de Locos*.”——

While he was thus engaged in soliloquies, the lay-brother, whose office it was to bring the lamps for the friars in a morning, entered the cell.

“Mercy on us, father Geronimo!” cried he. “Who could have expected to see you, this cold morning, as naked as you were born?—Pray put on your clothes, father Geronimo, for it is time to attend matins.”

“To whom are you talking, friend?” replied Antonio. “Who is your father Geronimo,

Geronimo, and what do you mean by your matins?—If you be a lunatic, (as I probably was, when I was brought hither) and chuse to fancy every body a friar, let me tell you that God has restored to me my senses, and that I am not pleased with your jokes. Tell me, in return, where I can find the superintendant of this hospital, and then go about your business."

"You are in a mighty snappish humour this morning, father Geronimo," answered the lay-brother. "Your Reverence will catch a pretty cold, unless you think proper to dress yourself. Besides, matins must be almost begun, and you know our father Superior is apt to be rigorous on these occasions."

"Dress myself!" rejoined Antonio.—
"If you mean me to do that, friend, bring me my clothes and wig."

"Your clothes lie there on the chair, as far as I can see," said the lay-brother,
"but how long it has been the custom for
Franciscan

Franciscan friars to wear wigs, you best know. Methinks your Reverence might chuse a more proper time for jesting."

The lay-brother now went, and left a lamp upon the table. Antonio was in a state of mind, which baffles description. He examined his abode, and found it to be a cell with a little furniture, as is usual in a cloister. On the table was a death's head, with two or three books.

"Heaven have mercy on me!" repeated he several times. "How can I be a monk?—If I am asleep, oh that I could but wake!"—

The cold was very intense, but he, nevertheless, abided by his firm determination not to put on the habit of an order, which he so heartily detested. He took the coverlet from the bed, wrapped it round his body, and seated himself at the table, on which he propped his elbow, and rested his head upon his hand.

"Jesus,

"Jesus Maria have mercy on me!" cried he, transported by fresh alarm. He felt once more at his shaven crown. He was now nearly insane. He sighed——laughed——wrung his hands——wept. He was disturbed in these employments by the entrance of a friar, who thus addressed him.

"What are you about, father Geronimo? You ought to be in the choir, and are sitting here. The father *Maestro de Coro* has sent me to enquire why you do not appear at matins, when you know that you are *Semanero*."*

"The devil take you, and your choir, and your *Maestro de Coro*," cried the enraged old man. "My name is Antonio Cerro, father Franciscan, or father Belzebub,—for both are alike."

"Pretty discourse this, father Geronimo," interrupted the friar. "You probably do not wish me to repeat it to the father *Maestro*?" "As

* The friar is called SEMANERO, whose weekly lot it is to sing, and execute other little offices at mass.

"As you like," retorted Antonio.—
"But a word before you go, father, if you really be one, or fool, as appears to me more probable, if we are (as I do not doubt) in the hospital *de Locos*. Tell me how I was brought hither, and why. Tell me by what right I am deprived of house, wife, clothes, and wig."

"Gracious Heavens!" exclaimed the friar, clasping his hands together. "Father Geronimo, is this the discourse of a rational being?"

"Once for all," roared Antonio, springing from his seat, and casting away the coverlet, "once for all I would not advise you to *befather* me, unless you be disposed to abide by the consequences."

"Fie! Fie!" returned the friar.—
"You seem to have made too free with the wine in the refectory yesterday, and its effects are not yet evaporated. Come, come, father Geronimo. Dress yourself, or if (as I may judge from your present appearance)

appearance) you are unable to do it without help, I will readily assist you."

With these words he took the habit of the order, and threw it suddenly over him. Antonio, (who would as soon have touched a toad as a Franciscan dress, so inveterate was his hatred of the order) bellowed as if he had been spitted, and made every possible resistance with his hands and feet. He called on all the saints male and female whom he knew, and probably in his great distress, on nearly a hundred more than were ever mentioned in a calendar, or canonized by the Pope. He also indulged the officious friar with a few hearty thwacks on the ribs, and at last compelled him to abandon his prey, and retire with a face, in which blue and red were strikingly intermixed.

As soon as Antonio found himself released from the devil, or lunatic, (for one or the other he conceived the friar certainly was) he rushed from the room, and
ran

ran without looking round him. But this was (as the old adage says) leaping from the frying pan into the fire, for he was met by the father Superior, and other friars, bearing wax tapers in their hands.

“What means this conduct?” said the father Superior, with the most rigid countenance, which his amiable disposition would allow him to assume. “Hitherto, peace and good order have prevailed in my house, and must you be the first to break it?—What! Dare you attack a monk, sent by the *Maestro de Coro* and myself, to remind you of your duty? Dare you lay hands upon a consecrated person, a *Padre presentado*,* an upright man, who edifies us all by his good example? Do you consider that you have committed sacrilege, and drawn upon you the horrors of excommunication?—But we will see whether we cannot teach you what it is to remain from church on a holy-day,

* A PRESENTADO is a friar, who is a graduate of an university, and recommended by his superiors.

day, to neglect your duty, and to assault a consecrated father. A couple of *Misere-re meis* will probably bring you to your senses. Prepare, father Geronimo. Quick! Make yourself ready."

"Who is to make himself ready?" cried Antonio, foaming with fury. "Do you suppose, cursed spirits as you are, that you have dominion over me? Avaunt!"

The father Superior, however, was not so easily deterred from his purpose. He gave a signal to two lay-brethren, and in a moment was poor Antonio's back exposed. Two others now approached with scourges in their hands, and began to flog him so unmercifully, that the blood ran down his back.

"Mercy!" cried he. "For Heaven's sake, mercy! What have I done that you should treat me thus? If you be men, have compassion on a fellow-creature, who never injured any one. If you be
L really

really friars, be satisfied with the discipline which I have already undergone, without, to my knowledge, deserving it. If you be demons, (as I believe) be kind enough to tell me for what sin God has delivered me into your hands. My conscience is pure, and I cannot accuse myself of any crime, unless I have treated my wife more harshly than she deserved."

"Your wife!" retorted the Father Superior. "Your wife, father Geronimo! You are not tired of these absurdities, then? Well! Let us see whether you or I shall be first weary."

He gave a signal, and the two lay-brethren renewed their exercise.

"I am already," cried Antonio—"I am weary already, my dear Father.—Mercy! Mercy! Mercy, good dear father!"

"Will you then be more rational in future, father Geronimo?" demanded the Superior. "Do you promise to amend?"

"Good

“Good Heavens! Yes, I will amend—although I don’t know in what particular I ought to do so.”

“What!” cried Philip. “I must own, father Geronimo, you have a peculiar mode of acknowledging your faults.—We must, however, try whether you cannot be brought to confession.”

The discipline was now renewed, and in such a way, that in a few minutes poor Antonio had scarcely a whole spot on his back. It was impossible any longer to endure such torture. He collected all his strength, tore himself from the hands of the lay-brethren who held him, threw himself at the feet of the Superior, and cried :

“I confess, reverend father, I confess that I am the most wicked wretch on earth. I will amend, I will, indeed.—Have compassion on me, I beseech you.”

“Will you, then, be rational, father Geronimo?” demanded the Superior.

L 2

“Oh

"Oh Heavens! Yes," replied Antonio.

"Do you know, father Geronimo, that a *peccatum veniale* committed by one of the established order is far more scandalous than a deadly sin in a secular?"

"I know it, holy father," answered Antonio.

"Do you know," proceeded the Superior, "that you are one of the established order?"

"I!" cried Antonio.—"Yes, reverend father, I am—although very unworthy of the honour."

"And by what rule?"

"Oh! By any most agreeable to your Reverence."

"Tell me, father Geronimo. Will you, in future, be humble, and attentive to the duties of your station?"

"I will! I will!"

"Rise

“ Rise then, father Geronimo,” concluded the Superior. “ Go, and kiss the feet of the father *Presentado*, against whom you have so grievously sinned.”

Antonio obeyed with tears, not so much occasioned by repentance as his smarting back. The Superior then commanded him to kiss the hands of the lay-brethren, who had been at so much trouble on his account, and he obeyed. Some of the younger friars were now almost unable any longer to refrain from laughing, but were checked by the Superior, whose real goodness of heart would never have allowed him to treat his brother-in-law in this way, had he not thereby hoped to alleviate the cruelty exercised towards his sister. He turned to the assembly, and cried in an angry tone :

“ At what are you laughing, fathers ? Methinks, it would be more becoming, if you were to weep, when you see the understanding of the best and most pious

man in our whole house thus disordered, a man, who, during a residence of twenty years, has never before given cause for complaint. Shame on you!"

"Twenty years!" thought Antonio, "Twenty years! Why, I could swear I was last night at my own house. But it must be true, for what reason can these reverend men have for asserting a falsehood of such a nature?"

"Put on your clothes, father Geronimo," said the Superior, "and come with us to the choir."

The poor wretch obeyed, but as he was not skilful in his management of the Franciscan dress, Father Philip gave a signal to a brother who assisted him.

When they had reached the choir, the Superior thus addressed him :

"What now, father Geronimo? Have you forgotten that you are *Semanero*?"

He then ordered him to sound the antiphona.

antiphona. Antonio, who knew as much of music as a crow knows of Sunday, was in great distress. His smarting back warned him not to make any objection, yet, if he obeyed, it was most probable that his ignorance would procure him a repetition of the ceremony so lately performed. A menacing look from the Superior soon decided the matter, and he began to howl in so discordant a way, that several friars were nearly choked by laughter, and the Superior, almost unable any longer to keep his countenance, interrupted him.

“What do you mean, father Geronimo?” cried he, “Is this the reformation so lately promised? Instantly sing with propriety, or you shall learn, to your sorrow, that I your Superior am not to be trifled with.”

“For Heaven’s sake,” said Antonio, with folded hands, “is it my fault that Heaven has not given me a better voice? I sing as well as I can, but God knows that I am ignorant of a single note.”

“This

"This is too bad," cried the enraged Superior, and ordered the poor chorister into close confinement, where for a week he was regaled with bread and water, and twice a day indulged with the discipline. He had now sufficient time and leisure to reflect upon his situation, but all his reflections were ineffectual. He could form no conclusion but that this punishment was inflicted upon him by Heaven for some dreadful crime. This crime, he was convinced, must be his jealousy, for, in other respects, he was certain that he fulfilled every thing, ordained by the church.

"Oh my dear wife!" exclaimed he, "I have sinned against thee, and suffer for it; but if ever I be released from my present confinement, I here solemnly swear that I never will again reproach, or misuse thee."

Had the fool been quiet, after saying thus much, he would, without doubt, have

have been very soon released from his prison, but unluckily he added. "Yes. I vow that if Heaven will again restore thee to me, I will never lose sight of thee—never move an inch from thy side."

We must here inform the reader, that a person was always stationed at a hole in the wall, to observe every movement of the constrained penitent, and report every word, which escaped him, to the father Superior. For this good man, who had no other intention than to cure him of his groundless jealousy, would not let him suffer too much, but was heartily inclined, upon the first appearance of reformation, to mitigate his punishment.—From the prisoner's declarations just mentioned, Father Philip wisely perceived that his brother-in-law's effectual reformation was still remote, and that, in fact, he did not think jealousy itself wrong, but merely the excess to which he had carried it. This species of confession, although somewhat in his favour, was by no means

a security against a relapse. Poor Antonio's complaint was to be radically cured, and he must have further opportunities of deviating from propriety, in order to justify severer discipline.

The week of his penance was now expired. The father Superior summoned him, and repeated the interrogatories,—whether he confessed his faults, repented, and would amend—to all which he answered in the affirmative.

“I hope,” said the Superior, “you will fulfil your promise, father Geronimo, and, as your friend, I advise you so to do. Hitherto I have only given you a little parental chastisement, and from my heart I wish that you may profit by it.—You know how much I have always been attached to you, and how often I have given you a preference to all the other fathers in my house. Endeavour to regain this favourable opinion, and to obliterate by good examples the bad impression,

sion, which your late conduct has made on me, and all our brethren. Be again what you have been during twenty years, and I shall again be pleased. But, if you compel me to act as your Superior, be assured you shall have time and opportunity enough to repent. Mark my words, father Geronimo."

Antonio listened in the attitude of a miserable sinner, with downcast eyes, and hands folded across his breast, not daring to return a single word. The Superior now commanded him, as it was Saturday, to accompany the father, who was going to collect alms for the cloister. Antonio obeyed, patiently threw the sack over his shoulders, and went with the other father *a la busca*, or in plain English, to beg.

"Conduct yourself with propriety," called the Superior after him, "and let me have no fresh cause of complaint."

It was not very probable that any one could recollect him, for exclusive of the
Franciscan

Franciscan habit, in which no one would expect to discover old Antonio Cerro, his appearance was much altered since his initiation. At that time he was corpulent, and had a full round face, whereas now he was thin as a lath, hollow-eyed as a dray-horse, pale as a tailor's apprentice, and sharp-nosed as a greyhound.

His companion conducted him through various streets, and at length reached the house of the painter. It was known that he was from home, and Theresa, as well as Sarfaganilla, had been properly instructed.

The unfortunate Antonio began to weep as soon as he saw his friend's wife.

"Alas madam," cried he, "the evil spirit is more severe against me than your Gonsalvo. Could you have believed that you would ever see me in this situation, and in this dress?"

"I see nothing unusual in you, father Geronimo,"

Geronimo," replied Theresa. "You appear to me just as your Reverence appeared last Saturday, and whenever I have seen you at my house."

"Father Geronimo," whispered his companion, "have you again forgotten yourself? Will you again incense our reverend Father Superior? Heaven have mercy on your back!"

Lightning could not have a more immediate effect upon the poor fool, than the idea of discipline.

"Merciful Heavens!" "sighed he to himself. "What a wretch am I! What can this mean? Theresa too calls me Geronimo, and Reverence. There may perhaps be a father Geronimo, and the devil, not content with having made me a monk, and a Franciscan into the bargain, may have given me his person, and thus are the fathers deceived, as well as Theresa. Who knows but this father Geronimo may have obtained my person, and be

801

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acting

acting the part of Antonio with my wife? Oh that this enchantment were at an end!"

Such were his thoughts, and none more tormenting could have entered his mind. He, nevertheless, uttered not a syllable, fearful lest his companion Father Vicente Rico might report it to the Superior.

Theresa could not but in her heart pity poor Antonio, so wretched was his whole appearance. She felt grateful for his great assistance in promoting her husband's reformation, and invited him and father Vicente to take a cup of chocolate. Father Vicente hesitated, but she was too pressing to be refused. A bottle of sack with biscuits concluded the breakfast, and never did Antonio so much relish a meal.

They now departed, and after wandering to and fro, arrived at the street, where father Geronimo had lived, while he was Antonio Cerro. His heart felt the reviv-
ing

ing influence of the breakfast and wine, and no sooner did he behold his house, then he shot into it like an arrow. He found his wife in her room, threw his arms round her neck, and almost suffocated her with kisses.—She, however, shrieked with all her might, and endeavoured to release herself.

“ ’Tis I” cried he, “ I am Antonio.—Look at me. Don’t you know your husband ?”

The more he addressed her, the louder were her cries, and father Vicente, with several other people came running to her assistance.

We ought, some time since, to have told our readers, that the Superior had appointed several persons, (some well and others ill dressed, that they might look more like persons passing by chance) to follow Antonio and his conductor at a distance, and to be ready in case their assistance should be wanted. As soon as

M 2

they

they entered the room, Francisca called to them : " For Heaven's sake, gentlemen, rescue me from the hands of this monster, who wants to commit violence upon me in my own house."

His companion and the assistants tore her from his arms, and secured him.

" Are you devils?" cried he. " Villains, unhand me ! She is my wife, you scoundrels ! I am master of my own house, and she is my wife, I tell you."

" Have you quite lost your reason, father Geronimo ?" said Vicente. " I don't envy you the discipline, which awaits you at the cloister."

" The devil take you," cried Antonio, " and your discipline and your infernal cloister ! I am in my own house, and no one shall turn me out of it."

" Pardon this circumstance, Signora," said Vicente. " This good father's intellects

lects have been some time disordered, and he is apt to fancy every house his own, and every woman his wife. I am sorry he has so much alarmed you, but he is really to be pitied, for 'till of late, he has always been an exemplary man since I have known him. He has been an honour to our order above twenty years."

" 'Tis false, you old villain !" cried Antonio. " I am not mad, and never was a monk 'till within a few days, when God for my sins delivered me into the hands of the devil. I am married, and there stands my wife."

" You ought not to let such a man come out," said Francisca. " The alarm has almost killed me."

" Why, Signora," returned the father, " we should not, had he not appeared quite rational this morning. He has, indeed, been tolerably composed 'till we reached this street, where the paroxysm suddenly attacked him."

M 3

Antonio.

Antonio, meanwhile, continued to be violent and obstinate, but father Vicente begged one of the by-standers to procure a coach, which, between ourselves, was already waiting. To this he was forcibly carried. Two of the assistants politely made an offer of their services to Father Vicente, and he was thus reconducted to the cloister. On his arrival, the chapter was immediately convened, and he was condemned to undergo double discipline and severe imprisonment, with no food and drink but bread and water, 'till he evinced unquestionable proofs of amendment. Some lay-brethren were summoned, who stripped him, and began their office, while at every third or fourth lash, the Superior demanded: "Who are you?"

"Antonio Cerro," cried he, "if you beat me to a mummy."

Whether his back had by a week's practice become more accustomed to the discipline, or whether he thought to overpower his

his tormentors by resolution, we cannot say. He, however, bore twenty lashes, before he altered his language, but now he could no longer bear the pain, and on the Superior's repeating the question: "Are you Antonio still?"

"I am Geronimo," cried he, "the poor unfortunate Geronimo."

"I thought I should bring you to your senses," said the Superior.

He was now chained, and lodged in a hole, where neither sun nor moon ever shone. A dim lamp, hanging high above his head, was the melancholy substitute for day-light. His companions were mice, and wholesome discipline his daily lot.— In this prison was he doomed to remain 'till his hair was grown to its former length. His soliloquies were again carefully attended to, and other opportunities of confession were allowed him. For instance, he had, once, just received his portion of lashes, on which occasion two monks

monks were always present, when he observed the two reverend fathers in conversation at the other end of his prison. They spoke in a low tone, but loud enough to be heard.

"What a pity it is," said the one, "that poor father Geronimo will not recover his reason! I cannot imagine how it has entered his mind to fancy he is married, and to call himself Antonio."

"It is a most ridiculous fancy, truly," answered the other, "to call himself Antonio Cerro of all men in the world.—You, probably know, that there is really an Antonio Cerro?"

"To be sure I do," replied the first. "I know him by sight. He is a most despicable wretch, who is notorious for the jealous cruelties which he inflicts on a most amiable wife."

"The very same," said the other monk. "I have heard the most abominable accounts

counts of his excessive jealousy. It is unaccountable how our poor Geronimo could think of personating such a worthless character."

Antonio lost not a syllable of this conversation. "Is it possible," said he, when they were gone, "that I am in such bad repute? Oh Francisca! My dear Francisca, were it but in my power to see thee one moment, I would kneel to thee, and intreat thy forgiveness. I would open my whole heart to thee, thou injured angel. Surely, surely thou wouldst forgive me."

This soliloquy was exactly accordant to the Superior's wishes. From this hour, he ordered the discipline to be diminished. Antonio's table was gradually served with better fare, and now and then, he was indulged with a little wine. His contrition appeared to be sincere, and his hair was grown to its usual length. He was, one night, lying on his hard bed, and had scarcely fallen asleep, when he was suddenly

denly awoke by a noise, which seemed to shake the whole prison. It was succeeded by a voice from above, which he conceived to be supernatural, and well he might, for it proceeded through a large speaking-trumpet, an instrument he knew nothing of.

"Antonio Cerro!" cried the voice. "Heaven has punished thee for thy unfounded weak suspicions. The tears of thy guiltless wife had reached it. Thy tears of penitence have also reached it.— Let this chastisement produce a reformation, and be a warning to thee throughout thy life."

The poor prisoner raised himself from his bed, and fell upon his knees. He clasped his hands, and raised them as high as his chains would allow, exclaiming:—"Whoever thou art, whom I hear, but cannot see, release me from this cave of horror, and my whole life shall prove the sincerity of my repentance."

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The voice had probably no order to return an answer, for he obtained none, though he prayed throughout the night. The next day passed like the rest. At night a larger portion of wine than usual was brought with his supper, and (as the reader will have long surmised) in the wine, a strong dose of the narcotic powder. As soon as this took effect, he was released from his chains and Franciscan habit. The venerable father Philip then accompanied him in a coach to his house, and restored the sleeping penitent to his wife.

As soon as she was alone, she crept, by the assistance of a confidential servant, into her sack, and failed not to put the key into the pocket of his drawers, where, as we have before said, he usually kept it.

The powder having fully done its duty, the late venerable father Geronimo, now Antonio Cerro awoke, and perceived that it was quite dark, a circumstance, which
had

had never before happened during his imprisonment, as the lamp was every morning and evening supplied with oil. To his astonishment he also perceived, that his hands and feet were freed from chains, and on minuter examination that he was lying in a soft bed. He was, however, not a little alarmed, on feeling some person at his side, nor is it to be wondered at, after all his adventures, if he fancied his bed-fellow a hobgoblin, and the soft bed as well as the vanishing of the chains some new enchantment. He immediately began to pray, but was interrupted by his wife, who kindly enquired if any thing was the matter, to which he replied: "In the name of all the saints I conjure thee to declare who thou art!"

"Who should I be!" answered Francisca. "Can you expect to find any one in bed with you but your wife?"

"Heaven defend us!" cried he.—
"Francisca—if you be not an agent of the
devil

devil—how have you gained admittance into this cloister? Don't you know that you are liable to be excommunicated, and Heaven knows what?—Run, run, my dear wife, for if you fall into the father Superior's clutches, your back will smart for it, I promise you."

"Are you dreaming, Antonio? What have we to do with cloisters and superiors? Awake, dear Antonio."

"For Heaven's sake," interrupted he, "don't mention that name here, unless you wish to be flead alive. The Superior assures me that I am father Geronimo, and that I have been a Franciscan monk in this cloister more than twenty years.—When I disputed this, insisting upon it that I was Antonio—as I thought I was,—he convinced me that he was right by more arguments than there are quarters of an hour in twenty years. "Double the discipline," is his morning and evening blessing. Fly, fly, my dear wife, or you'll be lashed into a monk in no time."

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"I

"I do not comprehend you, my dear husband," said Francisca. "If this be a dream, nip your arm, and you will awake. You were in your senses, when we came to bed last night. Surely you can't have lost them so soon!"

"What! Did I go to bed with you last night?"

"Yes. Have you forgotten it?"

"In this bed?"

"To be sure you did, and it would be as well if you were to leave it now, for I believe it is broad day.

"Wife, if either of us be mad, it is you. But—pray, where is this bed?"

"Joke away, Antonio. Where should it be but in our own chamber, as you will perceive, when the window-shutters are opened."

"Open them, then, my dear Francisca,
if

if you can, for last night and since I have been here, I never saw any window in this infernal place."

"That I will with pleasure," answered she, "if you will but open my sack."

"Your sack!" exclaimed he, in the utmost astonishment. "What! Have you been twenty years in the sack?"

Francisca could scarcely refrain from laughter at his strange medley of rational and irrational ideas.

After some further conversation, Antonio unlocked the sack, and his beauteous wife stepped out of it, like—Venus Anadiomene out of the sea—we would say, if we should not thereby subject ourselves to the task of writing a note for the benefit of our female readers, and we are not fond of notes. We will, therefore, let her step out of bed without comment, and silently observe how she trips across the room, and opens the shutters to admit

the light of day; although we have the finest opportunity in the world of comparing her to the ready Hours, who open the stable door for the beautiful Aurora.

Nothing can equal the astonishment of our Ex-Franciscan, when he perceived that he was actually in his own bed, and in his own room.

“In truth,” cried he, “this seems to be my room, if the devil be not again deceiving me; but how I came hither, Heaven knows.”

His late situation was so strongly impressed upon his mind, that it was some time before he could resolve to rise, and dress himself: Every moment he fancied he heard the approach of the Superior and his disciplinarians. As soon, however, as he left the bed, he threw that surest safeguard of chastity, the sack, into the fire. With the same solemn silence that accompanied this ceremony, he dressed himself,

himself, but when he went to the glass in order to put on his wig, and saw his hair in its usual state, and without any vestige of the tonsure, he began to cross himself. His wife enquired the cause, upon which he commenced a circumstantial account of his adventures in the cloister. She listened with every mark of astonishment, and at last declared, that of all the dreams she had ever heard or had, this was the strangest.

“What say you, Francisca? Do you call it a dream?”

“What else can I call it, Antonio, as you came to bed with me last night, and have never since left my side? But I must tell you,” proceeded she, “that I had made a vow to have fifty masses read for the poor souls, which are in purgatory, if Heaven would be pleased to remove my husband’s unfounded jealousy. I am grateful to Heaven for having listened to me, for had my prayer not been accepted,

I was firmly resolved to throw myself into a well."

"Saint Peter forbid, my love," cried Antonio. "I'll give you the money to pay for the masses, and fifty more, if you like, on condition that they are not read by Franciscans. Your prayer was heard, for be it a dream, or (as I am more inclined to believe) a supernatural reality, I swear to you, my dear Francisca, that I would rather not believe my own eyes, than again be jealous."

With these words he embraced his wife, and a thousand times besought her forgiveness for his late suspicions. His wife returned his caresses, and was generous enough to grant the forgiveness he intreated. From this period she enjoyed all the rational liberty, which a virtuous wife could wish for, and, to her credit be it spoken, she never abused it. Antonio endeavoured to be the kindest of husbands, and could he but have made himself

self thirty-five years younger, Francisca would have been the most enviable of wives.

A short time after these occurrences, our three friends found an opportunity of speaking to the Marquis. He was much amused by their recitals, and declared that he knew not to whom the most credit attached.

Doubtless, his Excellency's politeness made him say this, for we perceive an evident superiority.

“If I consider the execution of your projects,” proceeded the Marquis, “perhaps the fair Francisca would be rather inferior to her competitors, because she did most by proxy. But if I refer to the object attained, I must confess that she and Leonora have atchieved almost more than can be credited. We have examples—be not offended, fair Theresa—we have examples of reformed rakes, but I never
before

before knew a jealous man cured of his folly, or one, devoted to avarice and interest, converted. Yet I am, in the present instance, to decide on the merit of invention, for it was not previously stated how far you were to be active or passive. Suffice it that you have each attained your end, and that you each deserve the ring. The diamond is worth two hundred Escudos. I myself lost it, and rejoice that it has again fallen into my hands, as it is a family jewel, for which I have a great regard. Allow me, ladies, to redeem it with these three rings."

With these words he placed a sparkling diamond on the hand of each lady.

"Submit to my sentence," continued he, "without opposition, to which I beg leave to add, that I shall be at all times
happy

happy in promoting your welfare by every means in my power."

The three friends curtsied, and took their leave—as we do of our readers.

